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Week of
October 27, 1941

Critics' THEATRE REVIEWS

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†"As You Like It" opened Monday, October 20th, at the Mansfield Theatre.
†"Good Neighbor" opened Tuesday, October 21st, at the Windsor Theatre.
†"Candle in the Wind" opened Wednesday, October 22nd, at the Shubert Theatre.

THEATRE REVIEWS IS A COMPLETE GUIDE AND RECORD TO THE NEW YORK SHOWS

Critics' Theatre Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York papers

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NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
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NEW YORK TIMES
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NEW YORK JOURNAL AND AMERICAN

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"Candle in the Wind"

Reprinted from NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, *October 23, 1941*

"Candle in the Wind" Brings Helen Hayes Back in War Play

"Candle in the Wind," drama by Maxwell Anderson. Produced by the Theatre Guild and the Playwrights' Company at the Shubert Theatre, New York, Oct. 22, 1941.

★ ★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

MAXWELL ANDERSON is the lucky dramatist who has Helen Hayes for his star this season, and well he knows it. In the Shubert Theatre last night Miss Hayes paid him out handsomely with an appealing performance as the heroine of his war romance called "Candle in the Wind."

I had hoped to go on from there with a report that the cheers of drama starved playgoers could now be released, but I fear they will have to be smothered for yet another week or two. There are theatre satisfactions to be reported from the Shubert this morning, but they do not inspire cheering.

Mr. Anderson has thought to superimpose an understanding and withering blast at the curse of the world, which is Hitlerism, upon a love romance of two who found themselves sentimentally engulfed in occupied France.

Intense Romance

It is an intense romance, and the criticism of the Nazis is valid and occasionally eloquent, but the two issues fall someway to complement and sustain each other.

The romance seems a fairly wobbly foundation to bear the weight of such important propaganda. The propaganda seems to entangle itself weakly with the love romance at inopportune moments.

The lover is Raoul St. Cloud, a loyal French soldier and journalist who happened to sit next to Madeline Guest, an American actress, at a performance in the Comedie Francaise.

They walked away from the theatre together and knew from that time forward their fates were linked.

Raoul was a casualty from Dunkirk and was picked up by the Germans in the Garden of Versailles one early morning when Madeline had gone there to meet him.

And Madeline stayed over in Paris to try to effect his escape from the concentration camp into which he was thrown. She spent all her money in bribes, being double crossed with familiar German efficiency.

At the End

But finally one guard weakened momentarily and helped Raoul to escape. The lover was on his way to England when they grabbed Madeline as a hostage. But she was smiling at the end.

"Through all the history of the world there have been many wars between men and beasts," she says. "But the beasts have always lost and men have always won."

Alfred Lunt directed the play in something of the impressively serious mood and convincing realism he used with Sherwood's "There Shall Be No Night." But in this instance he has permitted a kind of dull gray monotony to settle over the telling of the story which smothers it with set rather than human speeches.

A fine, telling method in direction if it is not overdone, and it may be the Anderson writing has had something to do with it. The dramatist's prose is not as often fluent and inspired as his verse.

Miss Hayes is magnificently earnest and splendidly poised in performance. No dramatist can place her in jeopardy without extracting frequent spots of stirring drama as a result.

She wears a series of striking costumes, too, a little as though they were uniforms symbolizing her fight for a cause.

John Wengraf, an Austrian, is her chief support, and a fine actor. Louis Borell, a Frenchman born in Holland, plays the lover competently but his opportunities are limited.

Evelyn Varden nicely injects a bit of character comedy, Tonio Selwart has a sympathetic scene and Lotte Lenya does a maid bit well. Jo Mielziner's sets are solid and colorful.

Reprinted from NEW YORK POST, *October 23, 1941*

"Candle in the Wind" Brings Helen Hayes Back to Broadway

By WILELLA WALDORF

IT IS so pleasant to have Helen Hayes back on Broadway doing her bit to brighten what is, so far, a very dull theatrical season that we hate to admit that Maxwell Anderson's new play, "Candle in the Wind," is not one of his best.

That acting and technical efficiency are more to be commended than our local plays is a Broadway axiom nowadays, but Mr. Anderson is, after all, one of the country's leading dramatists and we went to the Shubert Theatre last night hoping, nay, praying, for something brilliant from his pen. Except at rare intervals—a flash here and there—we didn't get it.

Something has happened to Maxwell Anderson's dramatic technique in recent years. It is almost as if he had ceased to write for the stage at all, for his plays no longer have the power to strike sparks from an audience, to stir its emotions so violently that in the end there are cheers, not merely dutiful applause—for the actors.

"Candle in the Wind," reduced to its essentials, has a plot full of melodrama almost as lurid as "The Prisoner of Zenda" school of fiction, but Mr. Anderson, a highly literate writer, steadfastly refuses to treat his material melodramatically. As a result even the love scenes seem perfunctory and lacking in emotional appeal. Miss Hayes, who has wrung our heart in other probably less admirable dramas, was unable to move us at all last night.

Occupied France

"Candle in the Wind" is a grim play, devoted to the efforts of Madeline Guest, an American actress in Paris, to deliver her French lover from a German prison established in Occupied France after the invasion. Her failure, time after time, to bring about his escape, the systematic plotting of the German commandant to relieve her of her money and yet never to deliver up his prisoner, and the final discovery of the one weak link in the Nazi chain—an officer with some humanity left in him—all this should have made stirring dramatic fare. Mr. Anderson, however, has treated it all quite objectively, keeping the emotions well in hand, with the result that it becomes merely a succession of occasionally interesting, but never vitally affecting scenes.

Some of the speeches he has written for his characters are striking, such as the remark by the Nazi commandant to the effect that he sometimes regrets the necessity of exterminating the conquered . . . "There is a sort of decadent beauty that will be lost . . ."

On the other hand, to illustrate some of his points, which are quite obvious without illustration, Mr. Anderson introduces two school teachers from New Hampshire trying to reconstruct Versailles as it was in the days of Marie Antoinette. A year later they are still there, fainting from hunger and still living in the past.

A Good Cast

The school-teachers are among the more unfortunate of the playwright's inventions and we could hardly blame Miss Hayes for seeming rather ill at ease while they hung around. As a matter of fact, the star is not at her luminous best in "Candle in the Wind," but she is an actress it is always a pleasure to watch and to listen to, even when she is doing and saying things that seem, somehow, of very little moment, though they should be of almost world-shattering importance today.

To Evelyn Varden, always a delightful actress, go the comic relief lines of the evening and, as usual, she makes a great deal of them, although it was hard to believe that she, too, remained in France for over a year just to lend a helping hand, while frugally existing on half a soda cracker and cat meat, plus an occasional turnip.

The uniformed corps is brilliantly efficient under Alfred Lunt's careful direction. John Wengraf as the commandant gives a finely tempered performance as a gentleman who is, regrettably, also a Nazi, and Tonio Selwart proves himself an actor of skill and intelligence as the German Lieutenant who is "weak" enough to be human. Louis Borell as the French lover has a tough assignment indeed, emerging from prison only to indulge in the love scenes that tried so hard to be affecting but succeeded only in sounding stilted and unreal.

We thought Lotte Lenya got a good deal out of the part of the Austrian refugee acting as a maid in the hope of escaping, eventually, to America, and Mr. Mielziner's scenery was appropriately grim, the set depicting Versailles, if anything, being even grimmer than the prison itself.

"Candle in the Wind"

Reprinted from NEW YORK SUN, *October 23, 1941*

Maxwell Anderson's 'Candle in the Wind' Opens at the Shubert

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

MAXWELL ANDERSON'S "Candle in the Wind," which opened last evening at the Shubert, is written in prose, but it is prose that often sings. It tells a love story against a background of the implacable tyranny which has overcome France and threatens the world, and through that story makes oblique comment on the war between that tyranny and the human spirit. "Candle in the Wind" is a little slow to start, and now and then tenuous, but with it the season comes of age.

The story of the play is the story of a gallant lady whose lover is taken by the Germans in Paris. She is American and he is French; they are tied together first by their love, but also, and in the end most closely, by the partnership which all free people have in the struggle against the ideas which would end freedom. After he is locked in an internment cage, she stays on in Paris and fights to get him out. She fights with her money until its is gone, and with her wits, and time and again she is beaten. But finally she finds a crack in the wall.

It is not a literal crack. The system against which she struggles proves only humanly vulnerable. Money will not get her lover free, nor stratagem, but finally one of the men of the New Order betrays tyranny because the old order of humanity is still in him. A time comes, this Nazi lieutenant finds, when a man has to choose between being what he is, and dying for it, and being what they tell him to be, and living. When he makes his own choice, he helps the lovers, so that their candle can flicker a little longer in the wind.

The story, although many characters have parts in it, is uncomplicated. Many of the characters are mouthpieces rather than actors in the scene. There is, indeed, very little action. "Candle in the Wind" is basically the story of a jail break, but it is not told for melodrama. It is told to say once more those things about the freedom of mankind, and what Anderson sums up as the war between the beasts and men, which have been said in recent years by a good many, in a variety of accents. Toward the end, particularly, as the play builds in emotional intensity, the words he uses have the intensity and high clarity of poetry.

Before the last few scenes, there are some moments in which the play seems oddly distant, as if fine and interesting things were happening a long way off. Some characters—two old maids for example, who are seeking refuge in the past as they wander in the garden at Versailles—seem rather irrelevant. But as the play finds itself in the later scenes, these lapses are easily forgotten. By the time the final suspense ends and the last brave words are spoken by Helen Hayes, you will, I think, find yourself too moved to argue.

The acting of the play belongs to Miss Hayes, who must now be inadequately praised in a few sentences. Others are excellent—Evelyn Varden, John Wengraf, Tonio Selwart and Lotte Lenya among them. But as far as a play can belong to an actress, which is pretty far, "Candle in the Wind" belongs to Miss Hayes. Anderson's words take on new beauty as she turns them to her purpose; the character of Madeline becomes luminous in her playing. Louis Borell's playing, opposite her, of Raoul seems unfortunately flat by comparison, but the character of Raoul, upon whose imprisonment the whole play centers, is oddly incidental.

Alfred Lunt has directed the play with imagination and Jo Mielziner has provided effective backgrounds. "Candle in the Wind" is one of those fortunate things which happen when good people of the theater get together.

'CANDLE IN THE WIND'

A play in three acts by Maxwell Anderson; directed by Alfred Lunt; designed and lighted by Jo Mielziner; presented at the Shubert Theater on October 22, 1941, by the Theater Guild and the Playwrights' Company. The cast:

Fargeau	Philip White
Henri	Benedict MacQuarrie
Desaze	Robert Harrison
Charlotte	Leona Roberts
Mercy	Nell Harrison
Madeline Guest	Helen Hayes
Maisie Tompkins	Evelyn Varden
Raoul St. Cloud	Louis Borell
German Captain	Harro Meller
German Lieutenant	Knud Kreuger
Col. Erfurt	John Weingraf
Lieut. Schoen	Tonio Selwart
Corporal Behrens	Mario Gang
Madame Fleury	Michelette Burani
M. Fleury	Stanley Jessup
First Guard	Brian Connaught
Second Guard	Ferdi Hoffman
Cissie	Lotte Lenya
Corporal Mueller	Joseph Wiseman
Third Guard	George Andre
Fourth Guard	Guy Monypenny
Corporal Schultz	William Malten
Captain	Bruce Fernald

Reprinted from NEW YORK TIMES, *October 23, 1941*

Helen Hayes Appears in Maxwell Anderson's Portrait of Nazi Inhumanity, 'Candle in the Wind'

By BROOKS ATKINSON

MAXWELL ANDERSON and Helen Hayes have joined hands in a portrait of Nazi malevolence. "Candle in the Wind" is what Mr. Anderson has called it. As directed by Alfred Lunt, it was put on at the Shubert last evening by the Theatre Guild and the Playwrights Company. To disclose the full inhumanity of the Nazi revolution, Mr. Anderson has invented a story about a French journalist who is imprisoned in a Paris concentration camp a year ago. While an American actress is endeavoring to get him out by bribery or strategem, Mr. Anderson has time to remind us that the Nazi ethics are the reverse of our own, and that, as Hitler has already declared our world and theirs cannot exist together.

* * *

Since Mr. Anderson is a man of force and principle, and since Miss Hayes is a woman of exalted spirit, their statement of timeless truths is courageous and sobering. But in spite of the unity of conviction on both sides of the footlights, "Candle in the Wind" somehow lacks dramatic fire. It remains a drama of eternal events, spiked occasionally with a burning declaration of principles that does not come spontaneously from the heart of the play. It left at least one playgoer last evening unstirred by things in which he deeply believes.

Miss Hayes is acting the part of an American actress in Paris who has fallen in love with Raoul St. Cloud, a journalist and an officer in the French Navy. After the conquest of Paris, St. Cloud is imprisoned in a concentration camp for political prisoners. Most of "Candle in the Wind" is devoted to the actress's resolute attempts to purchase his freedom by bribing Nazi aftendants. There is a horrific sketch of the austere brutality of prison management. And before the play is over Mr. Anderson has occasion to reveal the moral baseness of the whole Nazi system and the closely integrated evil of Nazi philosophy and methods. As contrasted with the character of the American actress, the Nazi differences are not casual but fundamental and mutually hostile. Mr. Anderson is no one to mince words over a moral issue. His anatomy of Nazi culture is clear, complete, concrete and powerful.

* * *

What "Candle in the Wind" lacks in dramatic impact in the theatre must be some organic defect in the dramatic structure. Is it because the character of Raoul is so casually drawn? The story turns on the desperate necessity of releasing him from the sadistic hands of the conquerors. But the plan of the drama gives us only a slight acquaintance with him in the first scene, a fleeting glimpse in one prison scene and another in the last act. Although Mr. Anderson has written the introductory love scene with passion and rapture, the tone of the drama is generally impersonal from that time onward, and the struggle between the actress and the jailers is related to Raoul at second hand.

* * *

As stagecraft the production of "Cradle in the Wind" is superb. Jo Mielziner's massive corner of the Versailles park and his baleful sketch of a concentration camp give the drama a vivid environment. And Mr. Lunt's direction is brilliant, full of motion and dramatic detail. Although the part of the actress gives Miss Hayes nothing much more concrete than resolution with which to attack the play, she pours all her sincerity into it, and infuses it with gallantry and grace.

Louis Borell plays Raoul St. Cloud with romantic convictions. Evelyn Varden, in the part of a comrade from the States, puts a comic edge on the humorous lines Mr. Anderson has written, and animates every scene in which she appears. Mr. Lunt has directed the Nazi soldiers with a very proper respect for their correctness, sharp intelligence and discipline. As the commander of the prison, John Wengraf's erect, cutting, merciless superiority is acting of considerable dramatic vitality, and Tonio Selwart's melancholy subservience is excellent, also. Lotte Lenya plays the part of continental servant with the patient weariness of experience.

* * *

Some of the finest talent in the American theatre has gone into the making of "Candle in the Wind," and the cause it serves is enlightened and responsible. Although Mr. Anderson's moral convictions are passionate, his regard for his characters is a little platonic. The candle he has lighted does not burn for them.

"Candle in the Wind"

Reprinted from NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, *October 23, 1941*

Miss Hayes Heads Admirable Cast in Candle in the Wind

By JOHN MASON BROWN

ABANDONING blank verse, at least permitting its metronome to tick only in occasional lines, Maxwell Anderson has written Candle in the Wind, a play about the fall of France and how an American actress at last contrives her French lover's escape from a German concentration camp.

Although the Theater Guild and the Playwrights' Company have combined forces to produce it, and Alfred Lunt has directed it, and in it Helen Hayes heads a company of admirable actors, Candle in the Wind cannot be said to shine like a good deed in a naughty world.

One listens to it because of Miss Hayes, and the excellent performances of Evelyn Varden, Lotte Lenya, Louis Borell, John Wengraf and Tonio Selwart. Above all, one listens to it not because of what is said or done on the Shubert's stage but because of one's tingling awareness of the tragedy and the challenge of what has happened overseas. But though one listens one does so without respect for the play itself.

* * *

Mr. Anderson's play is neither what it pretends nor tries desperately hard to be—and that is important. If it admitted this, it would be much easier to admire. But it does not. Instead it robs the Thesaurus to hide the fact that it is no more than a melodrama which is afraid to be exciting.

In Candle in the Wind Mr. Anderson makes the fatal mistake of thinking that when he has written S for Sugar he has written V for Victory. It is his plot which leads him astray and betrays him.

Mr. Anderson loves liberty. He venerates freedom and loathes tyranny. No one believes more passionately than he does in what is indestructible in man's spirit. No one has braver words to speak about man's readiness to die nobly rather than to live ignobly. But this time Mr. Anderson's plot proves to be the wrong clothesline upon which to hang out the spotless laundry of his convictions.

* * *

The story he tells in Candle in the Wind is something which finds him functioning like a constant Ouida. It is nothing more or less than that good old wartime favorite (choose your war) about how one valiant girl outwits the wicked enemy singlehanded and gets her lover out of a prison and through the lines.

Mr. Anderson, however, does not stop here. Incurable romantic that he is, he approaches Hitler's mechanized forces with a cape and sword and some plumed words. His lovers—the American actress and the French soldier—have, of course, fallen in love with each other at first sight. They meet again, after the Germans have taken Paris, in an enchanted corner of the park at Versailles, where some spell is said always to reunite lovers. Two impossible old American ladies are also on hand; escapists, if you please, whose one desire at such a moment in history is to reconstruct the days of Marie Antoinette. Then, the French soldier is arrested, and the "escape" plot begins.

At least it would begin and run its course for the sake of thrills if only Mr. Anderson allowed it to. Instead he keeps it crawling forward by trying to inflate its melodramatics with slogans, ideological discussions and much sluggish literary talk. Occasionally he writes a good scene. More often his scenes are as repetitious as is the evening episode in the hotel. Sometimes they are as downright bad as is the whole of the last act which takes place again in the park at Versailles, and, believe it or not, again calls in the impossible old American tourists.

* * *

If, even so, one is not bored, Mr. Anderson has the production which Candle in the Wind has been given to thank for this. Certainly the evening's interest comes from the staging and the playing rather than the writing. Mr. Lunt, as director, has done an admirable job. His only sin is taking Mr. Anderson's words too seriously and slowing his pace so that each one of them can be properly enjoyed as if it were a flower from Shakespeare's garden. Mr. Mielziner's setting for the concentration camp is filled with a proper horror, even if his background for Versailles is cumbersome and lacking in illusion.

Ever an enchanting performer, Miss Hayes does wonders as the intrepid American actress. With a miraculous economy of means and a shining dedication she speaks some of the more impossible of Mr. Anderson's lines so that one almost believes them. She is a fascinating person to watch. If her performance is not deep, it is an arresting one which is infinitely deeper than the part she brings to life.

As her friend from America Miss Varden is superlatively good and extracts the fullest amusement from some of Mr. Anderson's better lines. Lotte Lenya is touching as the maid. Louis Borell plays his first scene and the only one which gives him a real chance with fine romantic ardor and much charm. And John Wengraf and Tonio Selwart are both of them admirable as the German officers. The only pity is that the play has more wind than candle to it. Even so it is pleasant having Miss Hayes back again in a modern play, which for all its faults, can be safely described as better than Ladies And Gentlemen.

Reprinted from NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE, *October 23, 1941*

Miss Hayes and the Nazis

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

WITH Maxwell Anderson and Miss Helen Hayes combining their considerable forces to belabor the Nazis, you might well expect that not only would the totalitarian cause take quite a beating but that the laggard dramatic season would at last acquire the excitement it has so long been needing. The sad news this morning must be that the promising event which was the premiere of Mr. Anderson's new play, "Candle in the Wind," proved to be a grave disappointment. As always, Miss Hayes is lovely, warm and deeply moving in her work, but even her magic can bring but occasional life to a curiously uninspired script. There are a few episodes of dramatic interest in the new work and a moment or two of genuine eloquence, but on the whole "Candle in the Wind" is a drama that is pedestrian in its writing, its thinking and its emotions.

* * *

It often is said that the theme of Nazi fury is so overwhelming that it makes playwriting particularly difficult and forbidding these days. What might be noted, though, is that this same topic can just as well be of greater help to a dramatist than his play deserves. The terror of the Gestapo and the concentration camp is so great that the mere placing upon the stage of some fierce, gutteral actors, with swastikas on their sleeves, lifting their palms in Nazi salute and threatening to destroy decadant democracy, can achieve a certain irresistible dramatic power, no matter how routine the writing of the accompanying drama may be. This is pretty much what happens in "Candle in the Wind." When a good actor named John Wengraf, playing a ruthless German officer, is browbeating Miss Hayes and expressing scorn for all foes of the Reich, the new play does achieve moments of chilling effectiveness.

* * *

For most of the time, though, the new drama consists of repetitive scenes in which Mr. Anderson's heroine attempts to bribe lesser Nazis to smuggle her French lover out of a concentration camp and is invariably cheated by them. In the end, one of the more sympathetic jailors actually does come to the help of the unhappy sweethearts. That is about all there is to the plot of "Candle in the Wind." It is the playwright's endeavor to use this narrative as a springboard for the expression of his viewpoint on the savagery of Nazi philosophy, the pathos of the fall of France, the cruelty of the concentration camps, the heroism of the democratic defenders and the fact that some Germans in reality deeply loathe the barbarism for which they are fighting. In every case, the author's sentiments are lofty and his prose style—for he has temporarily given up writing in verse—is earnest, but his play not only lacks deep eloquence but also suffers from diffuseness, repetition, a lack of clarity in characterization and a failure to hew to any particular dramatic line. Among other things, he has written a vague play.

* * *

As an American actress at first interested in saving her lover merely for personal reasons and later caught up in the feeling of an anti-Nazi crusade, Miss Hayes continues to prove what an exceptionally fine and moving player she is. It is not her fault if a certain vagueness in the characterization makes the part one of her less effective ones. A great defect of the play is that the lover is merely a stock figure, and for this the playwright is more to blame than is Louis Borell, who acts the part. The most showy and effective role is that of the sinister German colonel, and Mr. Wengraf plays it with force and incisiveness. There is also good work by Tonio Selwart as a sympathetic Nazi, by Miss Evelyn Varden as a comic-relief friend of the heroine, by Miss Lotte Lenya as a maid who knows her Germans and by Joseph Wiseman as a treacherous jailor. Jo Mielziner's settings are excellent. But "Candle in the Wind" really has only the justifiable popularity of Miss Hayes to lean upon.

"Candle in the Wind"

Reprinted from NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN, *October 23, 1941*

'Candle in the Wind' Opens at the Shubert

Helen Hayes Stars in Drama of Occupied Paris, by Maxwell Anderson

By JOHN ANDERSON

OUR two foremost producing groups, the Theatre Guild and the Playwrights Company joined hands last night at the Shubert Theatre to present Helen Hayes in a new play by Maxwell Anderson called "Candle in the Wind." No less than Alfred Lunt left off his acting long enough to direct the play, and Jo Mielziner flung up a stageful of opulent and impressive scenery.

These azure auspices ought to be enough for anybody, ought to be guarantee of fine value and full delight. They ought—and yet (though I put on sackcloth and ashes to report it) I fear that Mr. Anderson's play is only half as large as it looks and twice as empty.

It is a minor romance overblown against the tragic proportions of occupied Paris. It has its effective moments of melodrama, thanks to the terror of the Nazi military, and at least in Miss Hayes' performance, it does touch some eloquence of passion.

But for the rest it seems lumbering and somewhat stodgy, without the blunt theatrical frankness to make its melodrama thrilling, without the spectacular anger (which is one of its author's finest assets) to make it incandescent, or the emotion to make it romantically poignant and effective. It is streaked, but never fused, with these elements. Wherefore I bemoan a major disappointment.

Nazi Background

This disappointment might be unfair if it stemmed from arbitrary expectations of my own. But Mr. Anderson is a dramatist who has never evaded big themes, or shirked vigorous writing so that when he chooses to write about a love affair that sets itself against the Nazi tyranny, like as he says a candle in the wind, and to capture in the tale some satisfying statement of abiding faith and hope we have a right to expect something more searching, more glowing and vitally relevant.

At the end of two hours and a half his heroine does succeed in scrawling a large "V" for victory over the Nazis, but the emotional impact is dimmed in the fact that, instead of dashing it down with flashing vehemence, the play embroiders it, rather languidly. The result seems curiously artificial and synthetic and invented in spite of its perfect plausibility.

A love story, of course, is as good a way as any to show the gulf between the world of free individuals and the Fascist world of brutal State-worship in which the individual is nothing.

In choosing a celebrated American actress as his heroine, and a famous French journalist-soldier, who has attacked Hitler from the beginning, as his hero, Mr. Anderson has brought the issues clearly into personal focus. The trouble is that they are clear, even obvious, but not dramatically exciting.

The acrtress spends a year, nearly two acts, and quite a lot of money trying to bribe her lover's way out of prison only to learn the ferocity of Nazi mentality and the viciousness of bland betrayal and thieving trickery. In the best scene in the play she gets her lover out by playing upon the lingering traces of decency in a Nazi officer, and at the end she flings defiance at the tyrant who traps her as her lover escapes.

But even then, even against the grieving backdrop of the present world, where we know it's real, this has the superficial ring of musical comedy heroics, of the romantic cloak and sword school, willing to shed its last drop of grease paint. It could all be true; maybe even is true, yet it has the phony sound of commonplace theatricals.

This is due not to the material but to Mr. Andersop's handling. Too much of the play is taken up by long arguments between the heroine and the Nazis over getting her hero out, and between the heroine and her friends who try to persuade her to give up, and go home. The scheme is excellent as long as it really exposes the Nazi mind, but it repeats itself and grows tedious.

Though Mr. Lunt's direction is fluent and sharp in its details the tempo is too slow, and this, with the scenic over-production gives a stately effect that emphsizes the weaker points of the script.

Miss Hayes sustains the central part brilliantly, in spite of the fact that she has some of the most banal lines she has ever memorized. Her powerfully pitched performance often lends a tension to the scene that holds it together by sheer personal force and delicate persuasion. She even achieves variety in scenes of unrelieved sameness and in the scene in which she finally coaxes a Nazi officer to have a heart and betray the Feuhrer she is magnificent.

In that scene, especially, she is superbly assisted by Tonio Selwart, who has the best part he has had since "The Pursuit of Happiness," and who takes every advantage of it in an outstanding performance. There is an equally vivid though quite different portrayal of another Nazi officer, done admirably by John Wengraf, and Evelyn Varden, as an American coutourriere, enlivens some of the scenes with the perfect precision of her comic playing. Lotte Lenya contributes a charming sketch as a maid.

As the lover who hasn't much to do beyond the jittery romantic scenes at the beginning and the end, except lie in prison while Miss Hayes talks about him, Louis Borell is an effective, though almost non-resident hero, whose personal visits to the plot are suitably hot and extremely bothered.

But I fear the play represents one of our first playwrights in a relaxed and sentimental mood so that the most that can be said is that he has contrived a vehicle for Miss Hayes. The fact that it is by the same author who wrote her "Mary of Scotland" may be taken in extenuation.

Reprinted from
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
October 23, 1941

A Dim Candle . . . A Bushel of Words

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

IF THERE is anybody who still clings to the idea that Maxwell Anderson is one of the great men of our theater, I wish he would visit the Shubert and see *Candle in the Wind*. For in it Mr. Anderson has more than ever before given himself away, producing as ponderous and hollow a piece of high romantic rubbish as you would have found in a well stocked Victorian library. To be sure, *Candle in the Wind* has a far from Victorian background. It is laid in Nazi-occupied Paris, and loaded down with Hitler's underlings. But the plot has merely exploited Nazidom to tell us once more, and tell us badly, of a woman's frantic efforts to set her imprisoned lover free.

The plot is not to be damned merely for being old, nor is a *grande passion* to be ruled out because it runs a horrible risk of turning stagy. Mr. Anderson had, at least, a grim moment in history to give new life to these things, and a set of characters who might have provided fresh drama. But he has quilted the whole affair in the verbiage which is so dear to him, and forsaken talk only for melodrama. It is true that he has not gone in for that heavy lattice-work of blank-verse rhetoric which adorns so much of his work; the dialogue of *Candle in the Wind* has rather the sentence structure and choice of words you find in the editorials of our our-tonier newspapers. But it is no less false, if not quite so oppressive; and people cannot speak it and remain real.

But his people are never real, anyway. His American actress, struggling to get her French lover out of a concentration camp is, for all her great love, never painted as a woman. She is merely a talker. Her whole time is taken up, in scene after scene, with trying to bribe or cajole Nazi officers; while in scene after scene the Nazi officers express a point of view for which, by this time, they are fairly notorious. Finally, however, the lady swings one over to her side. I won't divulge what happens in the final scene in terms of plot, but I must report that in terms of writing it is one of the most glibly oratorical and operatic finales I have run into.

As though the play were not long and slow-moving enough, Mr. Anderson has introduced almost every scene with a carefully measured cupful of his deplorable humor; and has let a couple of dotty New Hampshire school teachers wander through the gardens of Versailles from June, 1940, to September, 1941—looking for a lost lake. No doubt they are meant to symbolize something—the ultimate in escapism, perhaps?—but they would seem a little weird even in *Hellzapoppin*.

The production, on the whole, is better than the play deserves. Alfred Lunt's direction, it is true, seems somewhat over-reverent, making a slow play even slower; and Helen Hayes, for all her skilful and attractive qualities, cannot save the play or bring her part to life. I even fear that at times she succumbed to the highfalutin that Mr. Anderson had ready for her. But Tonio Selwart was very good as one Nazi officer, and John Wengraf really excellent as another; while Evelyn Varden gave a genuine lift to a heavy comedy role.

"Good Neighbor"

Reprinted from NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, *October 22, 1941*

Sinclair Lewis Turns Director for Good Neighbor

By JOHN MASON BROWN

AS playwright and as actor Sinclair Lewis has of late been leading the life of Bethel Meriday. Our first American to win the Nobel Prize in literature is a stage-struck fellow if there ever was one. He cannot seem to get the grease paint out of his inkwell. As a novelist of recent years he has been all plays and no works.

Last night he approached the theater in what for him was a new way. He turned director. At least the program at the Windsor credits him with having staged Jack Levin's Good Neighbor for Sam Byrd.

* * *

His direction, though featured on the billboards, is hard to observe on the stage. Apparently in his new capacity Mr. Lewis did not wish to function as a ringmaster whose whip could be heard. He seems to have contented himself with leaving bad enough alone. Well, not quite that, alas, but with leaving it pretty much alone. His control is more than remote. It is undetectable. Indeed, his touches are so nonexistent that there is no good reason why, instead of dropping his new novel in midair (as the program says he did) Mr. Lewis could not have gone on writing it while sitting in at the rehearsals of Mr. Levin's script.

What drew Mr. Lewis to Good Neighbor must have been its theme. For what Mr. Levin tries to say in it is what Mr. Lewis himself said much more effectively in It Can't Happen Here.

Mr. Levin is a man who has a proper hatred of Hitler and of sadistic secret organizations whether they wear Brown Shirts or the hoods of the Ku-Klux-Klan. He is a person, too, who despises racial prejudice and meanness. The only trouble with his play is the old and tragic one—his skill as a dramatist is utterly incapable of doing justice to his compassion and his indignation.

* * *

His heroine is a Jewish matriarch in a Southern town; a woman of great kindness who puts her foot into it every time she opens her heart. Her efforts to save an innocent German-American boy from some hooded hoodlums who call him a Nazi and hunt him as a murderer provides Good Neighbor with much talk and little interest. Eventually her fight for justice costs the matriarch her life, but not until Mr. Levin with constant clumsiness has sought to establish her generosity, told of her well-meant borrowings from her son's savings, included her chats with a black Jezebel and a policeman who is a great archeologist, and recorded her good-natured bickerings with her indestructible old invalid of a husband.

All of this makes for an immensely dull evening; one in which suspense is about as plentiful as snow at the Equator. Although Mr. Levin's heart is in the right place, his dramaturgy isn't. Occasionally he writes a good line, but most of his Jewish dialect is no more fruitful than his plotting.

As the matriarch Anna Appel shows what a capable actress she must be, and could be here if only aided by direction. The others are not better than the writing.

P. S.—Please, Mr. Lewis, go back and finish that novel of yours and make it the sort of book only you can write.

Reprinted from NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE, *October 22, 1941*

Drama With Message

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

EVEN tolerance and love of neighbor can become dubious qualities when they result in so terrible a play as the new work at the Windsor Theater. Although they usually are considerably admired, at least to the extent of lip-service, these hitherto commendable virtues take on a strangely sinister air when elaborated by Jack Levin in something or other known as "Good Neighbor." Mr. Sinclair Lewis, who usually has a healthy scorn for anything with the word "propaganda" in it, was so excited by the message which Mr. Levin has to give us that he even went to the length of directing the play, after a fashion, and succeeds merely in proving that he may have been right about his suspicion of propagandist dramas after all. For here is one of the messes of the season, a drama loaded and sunk with good intentions.

* * *

It is unfair to Mr. Levin to say that he has written a bad play. He has done more than that. He has written two bad plays. One is about a sweet Jewish mother, who is so generous that she not only gives away her own money, but also disposes of the thousand dollars that her sailor son had left in her keeping. The other is about a young German-American, falsely suspected of being a Nazi and persecuted by a band called the Cavaliers, who pretend to be anti-Nazi, but are actually totalitarians of the worst local stamp. Sometimes the two plays get together temporarily, but usually they wander about the stage separately, both of them possessing only the common quality of incompetence. The number of plots and characters that are taken up and dropped add to the complication of the evening and succeed merely in puzzling Director Lewis as much as they do an audience.

* * *

There are occasions during the course of the Cavalier episodes wherein it appears that a bit of Mr. Lewis's "It Can't Happen Here" has strayed by mistake into "Good Neighbor." But Mr. Lewis, the director, must shoulder so much blame that it seems unfair to blame Mr. Levin, the author, as well. Let use merely say that his admiration for the message of tolerance and understanding between the races which the play dimly advances has unhappily blinded him to an exceptionally bad piece of dramatic writing. The acting isn't particularly helpful, although Miss Anna Appel and Gustav Shackt, who have the showiest roles, play with that appreciation of detail which almost invariably goes into the work of players who have been trained in the Yiddish theatre. "Good Neighbor" is about as helpful to the cause of tolerance as it is to the progress of the drama season.

Reprinted from NEW YORK SUN, *October 22, 1941*

'Good Neighbor,' Well-intentioned Drama, Opens at the Windsor

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

THE stage of the Windsor Theater was paved with good intentions last evening by Jack Levin, author of "Good Neighbor"; Sinclair Lewis, now to be identified as a stage director, and Sam Byrd, who as manager brought these two believers in tolerance together. Each of these has his heart in the right place and each has, one can only hope momentarily, misplaced his talents.

Mr. Levin's play is a muddled and wearisome business, part folk comedy, part melodrama and part sermon. It is about an elderly Jewish couple who run a second-hand store, perhaps in Baltimore, and befriend all victims of oppression. Among others, they befriend a young German boy who is falsely accused of murder and is sought by a mob of embryonic Fascists, who call themselves the Cavaliers. The Jewish woman, a fine person, is killed by these mobsters in the end and we thus see that neighborliness is more important than race and human tolerance, more important than either.

Mr. Levin has woefully complicated his statement of these essential truths and filled his play with dull irrelevancies of plot and character. He lugs in a sailor son whose money has gone to help the deserving, a love affair, a protracted anecdote about the old man's implacable liveliness in the face of ailments which baffle the medical profession and much other cluttering stuff. His writing is laborious and at times a little preposterous. He has, in short, treated some of the most important issues of the day in a fashion which evokes only yawns of agreement.

Mr. Lewis has directed all this with a minimum of imagination and a maximum of cliches and has permitted his actors, to do many things which actors should not be allowed to do. Anna Appel rises above both the play and the direction to make Hannah a warm and robust character, and Gustav Shackt gives a reasonably salty performance as Hannah's husband, Yankel. About the rest, including Mr. Byrd himself, who doubles as an actor, almost anything which might be said would be unkind.

"Good Neighbor"

Reprinted from NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, *October 22, 1941*

"Good Neighbor" Is 2d Avenue Brought Over to Broadway

"Good Neighbor," drama by Jack Levin. Produced by Sam Byrd at the Windsor Theatre, New York, Oct. 21, 1941.

★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

SINCLAIR LEWIS, America's Nobel Prize-winning novelist who has suffered a minor attack of stage fever the last several months, evidently sees Jack Levin's play, "Good Neighbor," as a drama bearing a message on citizen tolerance for our racial groups to ponder.

It is really another of those homey Yiddish dramas that the Yiddish theatre reporters frequently rush over from 2d Avenue to tell us about.

There is an old Yiddish couple in it—mama with a heart of gold and papa with a comedy illness. There are two sons, Barney who evidently married a bridge-playing gentile, and Dave who went to sea became a sailor.

Davie sent his money home, but mama, operating a little lease-lend enterprise of her own, lost most of it to her impecunious friends.

Mama was a tolerant and generous soul, and square as they make 'em. There were several ways she might have got the money back if she had been that kind of mama. She might have nicked her son Barney for it. She might have traded in her thousand dollar life insurance for part of it.

Or she could have claimed the thousand dollar reward offered for the capture of a mentally deficient young German whom she had hidden in her store to protect him from the hooded Cavaliers who wanted to lynch the Nazi soandso.

But mama stood firmly by the Golden Rule and got herself shot by the Cavaliers when they came for the German boy.

She was content to die, however. She had lived in peace and harmony with all her neighbors, and she had made over her life insurance to Dave, which squared everything.

According to Form

Mr. Levin's drama is cut to pattern and is without distinction. Only its actors can save it. For them and their performances there may be a public at a price.

If "Good Neighbor" doesn't go on Broadway, Mr. Levin can easily fix it over for Second Avenue, where they understand and like that kind of family problem play.

Anna Appel plays Mother Hannah with the skill and sympathy that years of experience and a well schooled art have given her.

Gustav Shackt abets her ably, and the others, including Producer Sam Byrd, playing Dave, do what is expected of them.

Frederick Fox did the settings. Mr. Lewis's direction is sufficient unto the play's demands.

'GOOD NEIGHBOR'

A play in three acts by Jack Levin; directed by Sinclair Lewis; settings by Frederick Fox; pesented at the Windsor Theater on October 21, 1941, by Sam Byrd. The cast:

Yankel Barron	Gustav Shackt
Hannah	Anna Appel
Heinrich	Howard Fischer
Whitey	Albert Vees
Mrs. Jacobs	Edith Shayne
Mrs. Kurtmann	Grace Mills
Officer Clydesdale	Donald Arbury
Luther	Arthur Anderson
Bessie	Edna Mae Harris
Miss Jolly	Helen Carter
Barney	Lewis Charles
Miss Jaffrey	Susanne Turner
Western Union Boy	Leslie Barrett
Doctor	Henry Sherwood
Hikdie	Marcella Powers
Dave	Sam Byrd
Leader of the Cavaliers	Winfield Smith
Second Cavalier	John A. Stearns

Reprinted from NEW YORK POST, *October 22, 1941*

"Good Neighbor," Directed by Sinclair Lewis, at the Windsor

By WILELLA WALDORF

SINCLAIR LEWIS, the novelist, playwright and actor, made his Broadway debut as a stage director last night at the Windsor Theatre with "Good Neighbor," a play by Jack Levin, a resident of Baltimore.

In addition to his services as director, Mr. Lewis is reported to be the chief investor in "Good Neighbor," and his interest in the play was so great, according to a program note, that he dropped everything—including a new novel—to bring it to the stage without delay.

The cause of Tolerance is a noble one, and the sentiments expressed by Hannah Barron, the leading character in Mr. Levin's work, cannot be repeated too often in times like these, but "Good Neighbor," regrettably, is not a good play, nor even a faintly stirring one, despite its well-meaning timeliness.

Mr. Levin, presumably, sat down to write a drama about a Jewish woman running a second-hand store in a large American city, who was a good neighbor. Though unable to read, she understood and valued the freedom that America offers its people. Though not a religious woman, she believed in extending a helping hand to those who need it, even in the face of danger.

Unfortunately, Mr. Levin sets his stage for tingling drama in the first act, and then dawdles along almost an entire evening before bringing on his hooded visitors—the "Cavaliers," first cousins of the Ku Klux Klan.

Mild Jewish Comedy

Hannah Barron courageously decides to hide poor young Luther Kurtmann, a half-witted creature, falsely accused of a murder, until his father's private detectives can find the real criminal. For the Kurtmanns are Germans and local rage has been roused against Luther as a "Nazi" although the Kurtmanns are as much against Hitler as the rest of the neighborhood.

Once Luther is hidden, however, "Good Neighbor" becomes merely a slow-moving, mildly amusing comedy of Jewish family life, generally more appreciated in the Yiddish theatres down on Second Avenue than uptown in the Broadway district. Anna Appel and Gustav Shackt, borrowed from the Jewish stage, handle this sort of sentimental fare with the ease of long experience, and are often entertaining in their specialty.

Mr. Levin, however, is not so successful with extraneous interludes involving Sam Byrd as the son of the house, a sailor home from the sea, and the girl he left behind him. Apparently lugged in purely to supply love interest, these scenes slow up an already very slow play. We also found the policeman on the beat who had an M.A. in archeology and talked like a college professor pretty hard to bear.

The only thing that rings true about "Good Neighbor," in fact, is its Jewish comedy. Why Mr. Lewis lavished so much loving care on it as a play with a message is hard to understand. When the hooded "Cavaliers" finally arrive along toward the end, it is hard to believe in their existence, although everybody knows, of course, that the Ku Klux Klan and other such shameful and dangerous organizations do exist in some parts of this country.

Possibly a stirring play is still to be written on the theme that so intrigued Mr. Lewis. "Good Neighbor" is merely an inexpert attempt to write such a play.

"Good Neighbor"

Reprinted from NEW YORK TIMES, *October 22, 1941*

'Good Neighbor,' a Drama of American Tolerance, Directed for the Stage by Sinclair Lewis

By BROOKS ATKINSON

ALTHOUGH Sinclair Lewis has been interested in the theatre for several years, she has been mighty cool to him. She bridled a little in the beginning, but the brazen hussy grows more disinterested toward him all the time. She was definitely aroused in 1934 when he wrote "The Jayhawker," with Lloyd Lewis, and she was ready for an affair two years later when he and John C. Moffitt turned "It Can't Happen Here" into play form. But something seems to have gone wrong in "Angela Is Twenty-Two," in which Mr. Lewis appeared in public out of town during the season of 1938-39.

Last evening at the Windsor Theatre he approached her from another angle. He directed the staging of Jack Levin's "Good Neighbor," and invested cash in the production. But the theatre apparently is less interested in him than ever. Perhaps his intentions have never been honorable—or, to be more exact, not honorable enough, for the theatre is no prude. But, to judge by the treatment he received last evening, the theatre is definitely through. The Lewis suit is cold.

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Mr. Levin's play has some correct sociological implications. Set inside a second-hand shop operated by a warm-hearted Jewish woman it tries to say that in America the Jews, Germans, Negroes and gentiles ought to be able to live together as good neighbors. But Mr. Levin is not the man to write that drama for the professional theatre yet. "Good Neighbor" is all thumbs as a play and is mixed up with more family crisis and neighborhood complications than you can shake a blue pencil at. In the last scene a masked delegation of American cavaliers pushes into Hanna Barron's home and surprises everyone by shooting her. What this proves only Mr. Levin and Mr. Lewis know, for the drama is up to its ears in unfinished business when the curtain goes down.

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If Mr. Levin's play is apprentice work, Mr. Lewis's direction is a beginner's job also. The performance looks like Monday evening in a second-rate stock company. As Hannah, the heroic good neighbor of the title, Anna Appel carries the play on broad and experienced shoulders with generous good-will. She could probably act the telephone book if necessary, for she has great strength as an actress and great warmth as a person. But there is no one around to give her any perceptible assistance. As the producer of record, Sam Byrd no doubt has certain inalienable rights in the performance. But what he is doing in it, in the first place, as a blue-water sailor, and in the second place, as a Jewish sailor, is one of the current imponderables.

The theatre is no respecter of persons. After a seven-year wooing, she has given Mr. Lewis an icy rebuff.

Reprinted from NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN, *October 22, 1941*

'Good Neighbor' Has Premiere at Windsor

Concerns Jewish Matriarch Who Hides Nazi Murderer Suspect from Mob

By JOHN ANDERSON

THOUGH Jack Levin was doubtless filled with good intentions and noble sentiments when he sat down to write "Good Neighbor," the results at the Windsor last night (the theatre, not the duke) suggested that he was also bulging with platitudes, hokum and similar ingredients of the more moxie drama.

According to a note in the playbill, the script appealed so strongly to Sinclair Lewis that he dropped a novel he was writing, left his publisher in grievous worry, and rushed to the theatre to direct the play for Sam Byrd, the actor-producer.

Such an Olympian event in the arts could be caused, one might suppose, only by the most powerful script. We might even picture the adamant Lewis trying to get the script out of his mind; trying to go on with his novel; trying to resist temptation, but finally yielding.

This pretty tableau leaves unanswered, however, the two following questions:

(a) What did Red Lewis see in the play to make him want to direct it?

(b) What did he do to it when he did direct it?

You can search me, for nothing on the stage at the Windsor indicated any reason for anybody interrupting even a haircut to direct it across 48th St. in light traffic.

Mr. Levin, to be sure, has written a play about intolerance, about a fine old Jewish matriarch in a Southern town who hides a youth of German descent suspected of being a Nazi murderer from a mob of local vigilantes. As a wise old woman, Mrs. Barron knows that the hooded gentry are cowardly lynchers and brothers in blood and tears to Hitler's own elite. She fights them back, and is killed.

This simple story, which ought to have at least some tragic dignity, seems as endlessly complicated in Mr. Levin's hands as the spaghetti Joe Cook used to dig hilariously out of a bowl by the forkful until the stage was covered with the stuff. Mr. Levin kept pulling out so many irrelevant pieces of plot—a friendly policeman, a vengeful Negro girl, a sailor boy home to find his savings gone, and so and so on—that I began to think Mr. Lewis had directed not one play, but several plays in modest collision.

The only redeeming feature of the evening was the strong, gentle, and somehow touching performance of Anna Appel, a veteran of the Yiddish theatre, who, in spite of some heavy strokes and broad humor, suggested a real character with warmth and conviction. Mr. Byrd plays a part with so little connection with the play that the character might have gone on with Mr. Lewis' writing while Mr. Lewis was directing.

In fact, I think it would have been dandy if Mr. Lewis had just gone on with his own work and not bothered himself or the rest of us.

Reprinted from
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
October 22, 1941

A Sinclair Lewis Flop Happens Here

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

AT LAST night's opening, one was not only curious to see what Sinclair Lewis would do as a director; one was equally curious to see the play that Lewis had stopped writing a novel in order to direct. But by the end of the evening one's chief emotion was utter bewilderment; one simply could not understand how the most celebrated of living American novelists could have blundered so badly in his judgment.

To be sure, one knew what it was in *Good Neighbor* that interested Lewis. Here was a plea for human tolerance dramatized in terms of an intolerant mob spirit that, if left unchecked, could bring Fascism to America. Here, in other words, was a kind of *It Can't Happen Here*. But in view of how horribly bungled and meretricious *Good Neighbor* is, Lewis might as well have got excited over some high-school student's incredibly bad composition, simply because it, too, preached tolerance and warned against Fascism.

Two Very Bad Plays

But the unhappiest part of the matter is not just that *Good Neighbor* is a very bad play, but that it is two very bad plays. Much the more prominent of the two is a hopelessly dated, crudely executed, half-humorous, half-sentimental picture of Jewish family life, centering in a hard-working, big-hearted mother. Merely shoved into all this is the play that interested Lewis. It concerns the son of some German neighbors on whom some wild-eyed Ku Kluxers fasten a murder and whom they are out to lynch as a Nazi. The Jewish mother hides the kid in her house, and for a full act Play No. 2 remains, like the kid, out of sight. Then a drunken Negro girl, who had had a cousin lynched and is thirsting for "revenge," learns where the kid is and blabs on him to the Ku Kluxers.

Approval of Purpose

One can approve what Jack L. Levin, the play's author, was trying to show; one can even see possibilities in his complex way of showing it: by having Jews defend Germans; by having Negroes misguided enough to encourage the very mob spirit that usually turns on them; by showing a Fascist mentality that begins by hunting down Nazis and ends up by shooting Jews. But such thematic twists would be ticklish enough matters in the hands of a clear thinker and an accomplished playwright; in Levin's terribly clumsy paws they degenerate into the worst kind of claptrap and sentimentality, artistic dishwater and ideological fog.

Nor has Lewis redeemed his bad judgment with good direction. He has made everything too loud and emphatic, and he has not even piloted the cast very smoothly about the stage. In the role of the mother, Anna Appel wangled some laughs and moments of sympathy, but she showed no particular skill, and neither did anyone else.

"As You Like It"

Reprinted from NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, *October 21, 1941*

Philip Bourneuf Notable as Jaques in As You Like It

By JOHN MASON BROWN

WHEN Strindberg's The Father was revived hereabouts some 20 years after its author's death, a gentleman from the local press insisted in his notice the next day that if only Strindberg would go to work and rewrite the last act, his might be a much better play.

After seeing As You Like It at the Mansfield last night I wish that I, too, could so misplace my necrology. For to a certain playwright, not unknown as William Shakespeare, I would like to give some advice. Were I not browbeaten by Bardolatry, I might be bold enough to say, "If only Mr. Shakespeare will rewrite whole stretches of his comedy, his As You Like It might be something that modern playgoers could enjoy without cringing."

His pastoral is no easy play either to produce or to endure. It has its passages of sheer sunlight when its philosophers and its lovers turn the Forest of Arden into the most beguiling of havens. Many of its lines and some of its scenes are imperishable in their beauty. Wise or gay, they remain dateless in their charm—especially in the reading.

But then there is the plot; that silly, stupid plot, with its tangled subplots, its sudden conversions, its strange hurly-burly of the affections, and those swains who come trooping at the end to marriage as plentifully as couples to the Ark.

These wholesale courtships may have been as acceptable to the Elizabethans as was some of the foolishness with which these courtships are advanced. But if plainly they held little real interest for Shakespeare, they hold less for us. We can't help wondering what Havelock Ellis would have said of some of these odd duets.

We can't help sensing that the wedding bells which ring out gally at the final curtain ring out on the most tragic assortment of mismarriages the drama has ever assembled. We can't help realizing that those lesser swains, with all ther cloying archness, only detract from what is charming in the atmosphere of the banished Duke's court and enchanting in Rosalind's pursuit of Orlando.

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At the Mansfield last night it seemed for quite a happy while as if Eugene S. Bryden's direction were going to be blessedly free of the usual humorous accesses. Mr. Bryden started the comedy moving without those painful running entrances and exits, those ball-tossings, gigglings, eye-rollings and stylized bickerings by means of which four years ago Samuel Rosen attempted in the Surrey Players' revival to fortify Shapespeare's failings.

At the outset the Celia of Carol Stone was all radiance and contagious gaiety. In Alfred Drake, Mr. Bryden has found a personable young Orlando, who spoke pleasantly and with fervor. Charles, the wrestler, was a comic fellow; a fascinating mixture of Two-Ton Tony Galento and Elsa Maxwell. Leonard Elliott as Touchstone was about as good as a person can be as one of those Shakespeare clowns that makes a spectator's heart bleed for the fellow who is playing it.

The script was acted honestly and with invention. The sylvan charm of the banished Duke's court was persuasively established. And as Jaques, Philip Bourneuf was brilliant. Indeed, throughout Mr. Bourneuf's continues to be a notable performance; witty, sardonic; relishing its melancholy; possessed of infinite dignity; by all odds the finest Jaques I have ever seen.

But when the saps began running about the trees in Arden and the rustics got loose, Mr. Bryden surrendered to an old temptation. Out of sheer desperation he began to overdo as a director. In his attempts to enliven the script's dullness he had people bumping into one another at a great rate; hiding behind pcare's flopping down on the greensward, and trilling and mugging away for all they were worth. His direction, in other words, finally got the "cutes," and in its second half became almost as difficult to take as is the play.

By this time one had tired of Lemuel Ayers' little bump of a forest with its wobbly trees, and the same Mr. Ayers' grab-bag assortment of costumes. Above all, one had begun to long for a real Rosalind. Because good as are many of the production's points, and notable as is its Jaques, Helen Craig is a highly unsatisfactory Rosalind. As the deaf-mute with one line to speak in Johnny Belinda Miss Craig was far more eloquent. All the lovely effervescence of one of Shakespeare's most beguiling heroines is lacking in her playing. As Rosalind Miss Craig is a passable Ophelia. Her gestures are awkward; her body is stiff; her manner charmless; and her acrobatics are without humor.

Mr. Byrden does all that he can for As You Like It, except to give it a Rosalind worthy of his efforts.

'AS YOU LIKE IT'

Shakespeare's comedy, arranged in two acts; directed by Eugene S. Bryden; settings and costumes by Lemuel Ayers, incidental music by Henry Holt; presented at the Mansfield Theater on October 20, 1941, by Ben A. Boyar and Mr. Bryden. The cast:

Orlando	Alfred Drake
Adam	Ross Matthew
Oliver	Arthur L. Sachs
Dennis	Kenneth Tobey
Charles	Peter Cusanelli
Celia	Carol Stone
Rosalind	Helen Craig
Touchstone	Leonard Elliott
Le Beau	John Lorenz
Duke Frederick	David Leonard
Corin	Harry Sheppard
Silvius	John Call
Jaques	Philip Bourneuf
Amiens	Murvyn Vye
Duke	David Leonard
Audrey	Valentine Vernon
Sir Oliver Martext	James O'Neill
Phoebe	Paula Trueman
William	Kenneth Tobey

Reprinted from NEW YORK TIMES, *October 21, 1941*

Shakespeare's 'As You Like It' Revived with Helen Craig as Rosalind and Philip Bourneuf as Jaques

By BROOKS ATKINSON

PROBABLY it is something to see the melancholy Jaques played brilliantly. That is the chief virtue of the "As You Like It," which was put on at the Mansfield last evening. Eugene S. Bryden, a refugee from Europe, has staged Shakespeare's pastoral with several ideas and some imaginative intentions, and Helen Craig, who was mumming the mute in "Johnny Belinda" last season, is appearing as Rosalind.

But it must be confessed that the result is a mixture of sententious Shakespeare playing and idle caperings on the margins of a dramatic schoolbook. Say something pleasant about Lemuel Ayers's stylization of the Forest of Arden, where a few gaunt trees and shimmering leaves do very nicely. By casting Peter Cusanelli, a Madison Square Garden type of wrestler, in the part of Charles, the bone-breaker, Mr. Bryden has managed to get a touch of the grotesque industry of grunt into Shakespeare—a praiseworthy achievement. Harry Sheppard brings an honest trouper's common sense to the part of Corin, the muddled shepherd, and this is enlivening also.

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In a mannered discursion like "As You Like It," the best actors are those who are not afraid of Shakespeare. Alfred Drake is an actor of that calibre. He is intelligent and frank; and since he speaks his lines as though an ordinary person might conceivably understand their meaning, his Orlando is intelligible and engaging. Philip Bourneuf has more than that to contribute. Playing the part of Jaques which is steeped in tradition, he has had the courage to come up with a modern idea that defines the morose cynic as a member of the human race. Mr. Bourneuf's melancholy is sardonic — dry and amused, and his manner is crisp and light-footed. Since he regards the lines as adult observations about life, every word is full of casual meaning.

No one who remembers Mr. Bourneuf's playing in Shaw's "On the Rocks" a few years ago is surprised to see how ably he is playing the ruminating rogue in Shakespeare's idyll. His Jaques is the best this column has ever seen. It is not only the best, but it is wettlesome and delightful and deserves to be generally recognized.

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But what are we to say about the twittering prankfulness of the performance as a whole? We can say that Shakespeare made "As You Like It" hard to play. The plot is coy, which is something grievous to begin with. Shakespeare's fools are elusive characters, and Leonard Elliott has not got a firm hold on Touchstone. When boys played the women's parts in Shakespeare's time the masquerades he fobbed off on them may have had some special quality as make-believe. But it takes grace, charm and composure to make the masquerades palatable today. Mr. Bryden's direction of the women's parts is kittenish. Miss Craig, Carol Stone, Valentine Vernon and Paula Trueman play cutely. They rush the whimsicalities at you in billows of girlish artifice. "As You Like It" is not quite so silly as that.

"As You Like It"

Reprinted from NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, *October 21, 1941*

"As You Like It" Is Revived With Helen Craig as Rosalind

"As You Like It," comedy by William Shakespeare. Revived by Ben A. Boyar and Eugene S. Bryden at the Mansfield Theatre, New York, Oct. 20, 1941.

★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

I DO not know why Ben Boyar and Eugene Bryden were moved to revive Shakespeare's "As You Like It" at this time, unless it was to confirm someone's faith in Helen Craig's talent as an actress. And for that, so far as I know, there was no need of confirmation.

Perhaps they wanted to make sure Miss Craig could talk again, after a year of "Johnny Belinda."

This Shakespearean comedy has but slight appeal, even for Shakespeare enthusiasts. It has figured frequently in the repertoire of the best actresses, but only, I have always thought, because the ladies playing Rosalind were noted for their shapliness and their charm, and were eager to toy with a light romance for the refreshment of their spirits after a siege of heavier drama in their repertories.

Four years ago an intrepid little band of players who had been spending the Summer at the Surrey Theatre in Maine brought the story of Rosalind and Orlando to Broadway and did their dutiful and talented best to breathe the breath of life into it, but without success. Katharine Emery and Sheppard Strudwick were the lovers then.

Now I fear Miss Craig and her competant supporting players are going to have a like experience. She is a personable and an earnest Rosalind. Accoutered as a boy, without the show of doublet and hose that has attracted most of her sisters, she plays the heroine with honest respect for the text.

There is in her first scenes a depth of emotion that is very genuine and, with the aid of Carol Stone as a particularly lively and charming Celia, and an honestly emotional Orlando in Alfred Drake, she carries the action past the wrestling scene with more fevor than usually attends it.

But from that point on, with the sighing and clowning lovers rushing foolishly about a stagey Arden, the interest in the comedy diminishes steadily.

Only the most firmly established stage personalities can ever hope to save it. A Marlowe, a Rehan, a Crosman in our time; a Langtry or a Coghlan in the day before that. All the feminine great ones of the past used it only to polish off their personal popularities and usually as a matinee bill.

The present revival has been staged at the Mansfield by Producer Bryden, credited with a successful career abroad. It is attractive in its simplicity, being played in a tiny yard at Frederick's court and on a knoll in Arden that revolves when necessary.

Nice Pictures

The lighting is soft and the trees, stuck in the knoll, someway have a suggestion of solidity. No attempt has been made to achieve a literal realism. This has always been a task with "As You Like It," but I'm not sure now it is not more dramatically effective than a skeletonized and stylized setting.

A nice care in reading has been drilled into the Craig company. That may be Bryden teaching, too. Philip Bourneuf delivered himself of Jaques' observations of life through seven ages with simple eloquence and splendid effect.

Miss Craig, Miss Stone and Mr. Drake, as intimated, were always well in character and honest in feeling. Harry Sheppard got more from Corin than most actors do. Leonard Elliott was an acceptable Touchstone.

Even the bits, Peter Cusanelli as a bulky and comic Charles the wrestler; Valentine Vernon as the gawky but impassioned Audrey; Paula Trueman as the Phoebe, a fine Adam by Ross Mathew, and the drooling herders had color.

But the text, for all its occasional flights of beauty, was lacking in body, as usual. And the actors cannot be blamed for that.

Reprinted from NEW YORK POST, *October 21, 1941*

"As You Like It" Laughed To Death at the Mansfield

By WILELLA WALDORF

"AS YOU LIKE IT" is one of the lighter works of Shakespeare, and the producers of last night's version at the Mansfield have seen to it that nobody will confuse it for one second with any of the tragedies.

As many of the characters as possible are portrayed in the low-comedy vein, life in the Forest of Arden is one long romp, and most of the actors are so choked with mirth throughout the play that it is difficult to understand what they are trying to say. We have encountered a number of "As You Like Its" in the past few years, but this is the first in which the role of Celia is not played, but giggled. Rosalind herself is generally in a state of near-hysteria and even the melancholy Jaques enters with a chuckle.

It is customary, of course, for the characters in Shakespeare's plays to laugh politely at his professional jesters, whether they happen to be funny or not, but Touchstone is not the only fool in the current "As You Like It." The Forest of Arden swarms with pastoral clowns splitting their sides over one another's witticisms.

The Boyar-Bryden version of "As You Like It," in fact, is the most trying Shakespearean ordeal this department has sat through in a long time. Not only is most of the text chewed up and swallowed, or giggled to death, but the scenery and costuming struck us as peculiar, not to say distracting.

Hump, With Trees

The first few scenes, including the wrestling match, are played in a small space featuring a hump in the middle containing four trees. Add half a dozen more trees later on and you have the Forest of Arden, still featuring the hump. This makes sure that the actors will teeter around on an incline most of the evening, and it is a credit to the equilibrium of the company that nobody, as far as we could see, actually fell down.

The reason for this arrangement, presumably, was to do away with interminable waltz while the settings were changed, and in this respect, at any rate, the hump served its purpose, although we must admit a preference for plain black drapes if everything is to be acted in one place without lowering the curtain more than two or three times during the evening.

Rosalind in Slacks

But the costuming of the current "As You Like It" has us baffled. Some of the characters are dressed in traditional, or reasonably traditional, style, while others range from musical comedy getup to modern dress. For the first time in our playgoing career it was a relief to see Rosalind get out of boy's clothes, for Helen Craig wore dark blue slacks and a red coat and hat, an outfit copied, no doubt, from What the Well-Dressed Stenographer Will Wear on a Walking Trip Through The Bronx.

Some critics in the past have given it as their opinion that no actress can be downright bad as Rosalind, but to Miss Craig goes the distinction of proving them wrong. Part of her troubles in the role may be laid, beyond a doubt, at the door of her director, and a lot more at the feet of her costumer, but even so, her reading of the role was a sad disappointment to this reviewer, as was the rest of the production.

Carol Stone, a charming person to look at, was, we stated above, forced to giggle her lines almost without pause, and she too wore modern garb in the Forest. She also busied herself hanging out cute little washings and knitted now and then, no doubt for Bundles for Britain. This was while the two girls were living in a pup tent pitched on the hump.

We haven't the heart to mention many more of the actors except to say that Alfred Drake as Orlando gave the nearest approach to a satisfactory performance of any of the cast, and would probably make a good hero in any other production of the play, while Philip Bourneuf had his moments as the melancholy Jaques. Some of the clowns were funny now and then but there is altogether too much clowning in this "As You Like It." It grows very tiresome indeed.

Mr. Bryden, by the way, has the two Dukes, real and usurper, played by the same actor. The usurper looked like a disgruntled coachman and the real Duke wore a good deal of hair and was surrounded by a number of attendants who resembled Daniel Boone except that they carried lutes and sang.

"As You Like It"

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Forest Antic

By RICHARD WATTS, JR.

IF YOU are anxious to see a performance of "As You Like It," the production at the Mansfield probably is just the thing for you. This note of uncertainty which creeps into my verdict is the result of a certain doubt in my mind as to what a presentation of this pastoral comedy should contain. In my carefully considered opinion "As You Like It" is virtually the least rewarding of all the Shakespearean works. There is much of youthful, dewy loveliness in it, but there is likewise more than its share of antic whimsy, artificial high spirits, childish dramaturgy and artificial simplicity. Since this antic artificially is the outstanding trait of the work, it perhaps is the wisest thing to present it with all its grim gayety rampant, and certainly this is the way that Eugene S. Bryden has staged it in the current edition.

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In many ways Mr. Bryden is undeniably successful. The settings, the arrangement of scenes and the music are attractively managed; the episode of Charles the Wrestler and his unhappy battle with the triumphant Orlando is handled with unexpected humor, and the first scene of the banished duke and his followers in the forest, before too much of the plot has entered, is presented with unusual freshness and forthright charm. In fact, most of the episodes in which the men appear are pleasantly maipulated, even though Touchstone continues to be one of the most exasperating of the Shakespearean clowns. But the director has been less successful with his women. When they appear he seems unable to resist going to extremes in his whimsies and his charm, and since the women are almost always darting about in the play, the matter usually proceeds to go in for excess.

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Here again the issue grows a trifle complex. Since there is about "As You Like It" all the quality of a high-school charade and very little that is more enlivening than that, it may, for all I know, be the proper way for a director to approach it to pull out all the stops and let the playfulness go on unrestrained. This is no doubt the manner in which the play's most characteristic qualities can be brought out, but it is my firm belief that a little restraint, a little reticence and a little realization that a touch of cuteness is a dangerous thing would have been of great help to a modern presentation of this merry pastorial antic. In the end, though, it all goes back to one matter: If you find the Elizabethan high spirits of "As You Like It" enchanting in themselves, you will discern them in all their archness in the current edition. Otherwise you had better be careful.

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That interesting and oncoming young actress, Miss Helen Craig, is, I am afraid, not at her happiest as Rosalind. She is inclined to work too hard, and there is a sense of strain about what she does in a role in which, it is my guess, Miss Katharine Hepburn, of all the current players, would be the most successful. On the other hand, the high-school naturalness of Miss Carol Stone as Celia seems to fit in with the production admirably. Most successful, however, are some of the men of the cast. Although Philip Bourneuf loses all the poetry of the celebrated speech about the seven ages of man, his casual, easy-going manner makes the other aspects of his characterization of the melancholy Jaques interesting and effective. Alfred Drake is an excellent Orlando; Harry Sheppard is skillful as, of all things, the shepherd, and Peter Cusanelli plays Charles the Wrestler amusingly. Here is an antic, unpoetic "As You Like It" which leaves an unexciting classic about where it found it.

Reprinted from NEW YORK SUN, *October 21, 1941*

Shakespeare's 'As You Like It' Opens at the Mansfield Theater

By RICHARD LOCKRIDGE

SHAKESPEARE'S "As You Like It" evidently presents an almost overwhelming temptation to actors and directors, who in this respect differ rather sharply from audiences. Eugene S. Bryden is the director and Miss Helen Craig chief of the actors who succumbed to this temptation last evening at the Mansfield, offering the comedy with a great deal of dash and eagerness and not, on the whole, getting very far with it.

It is probable, of course, that "As You Like It" presents a permanent source of bafflement to modern actors. It is not a very funny comedy, although its cast contains the celebrated Touchstone, and its plot is one of the more preposterous tangles of masquerade. It is in "As You Like It," students will remember, that Rosalind adopts male clothing and for several tolerably long sequences convinces her lover, Orlando, that she is really a boy. (These masquerades must have been more credible in Shakespeare's theatre, where Rosalind was actually played by a boy. And perhaps the fools were funnier in that other day.)

But if "As You Like It" is never very funny, it has a light gayety of its own—a gayety implicit in the songs and raillery, the agilely turning phrases, the polished lightheartedness of its make-believe. Now and then there were glimpses of that mannered lightness last evening. It was suggested, for example, by Philip Bourneuf's playing of Jaques. There were moments of it, on another plane, in the playing of Silvius by John Call. But most of the hands were woefully heavy, and in place of artful precision we got archness and much loose running around.

Miss Craig's playing of Rosalind, for example, is almost exclusively gymnastic. Her long servitude as the deaf mute in "Johnny Belinda" has marked Miss Craig. Now, with lovely words to speak, she pantomimes as desperately as when she had no words at all. She is physically graceful, and she is certainly tireless, but she is not a good Rosalind. Several of the others, including in the later scenes, Carol Stone, who played Celia, were infected by this method and whipped themselves around the stage, which had an odd hump in the middle for reasons no doubt clear to Lemuel Ayers, the designer, who put it there. Alfred Drake was a straight-forward, realistic Orlando and Leonard Elliott was a somewhat elfin Touchstone. Many of the others were competent and all were willing.

But all the willingness in the world doesn't help much when it comes to acting "As You Like It." Polished artifice is what you need. This is one of the things the cast now playing at the Mansfield hasn't got.

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October 21, 1941

Hey Nonny Nonny And a Ho Ho Hum

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

IN ITS despair, this sleazy, worthless season turned to Shakespeare last night for help; but the situation this morning is just about what it was. *As You Like It*, though one of Shakespeare's better known plays, is on the stage one of his least successful. One may acknowledge the verdancy of some of its poetry and the high spirits of some of its fooling. One may allow, also, that in any final Shakespearean gallery, Rosalind and Jaques and Touchstone have a definite place. But behind the footlights the play is beyond all question a bore. It has virtually no plot, and what plot it has is tiresome nonsense. Its humor collapsed long ago; its bucolic clowning is sad to watch; and its lovemaking—four couples strong!—is arch and incessant and visually idiotic. Arcadia is a pleasant place, but its innocent enjoyments are at cross purposes with the conflicts and struggles which are cardinal to the theatre. A little hey nonny nonny goes a terribly long way.

Realizing that "As You Like It" needs something more than pastoral charm, last night's production tried to supply it. It tried, in fact, all too hard. It set out to be buoyant and lively; it ended up frisky and skittish. Everybody pranced and sported, and scampered and cavorted, and made merry and sang Ho! The bumpkins refused to be anything less than village idiots. As Touchstone, Leonard Elliott darted about like a coquettish Mephistopheles. As Phoebe, Paula Trueman (who can usually be depended upon) brought back memories of Ray Dooley in the old Ziegfeld *Follies*. As Celia, Carol Stone chiefly giggled.

And I'm afaid that as Rosalind, Helen Craig pretty much followed suit. There were moments when the star of *Johnny Belinda* was pleasing, but she too chased butterflies, and wiggled and waggled, and succumbed to the general coyness. Blame Shakespeare for some of the trouble, but Bryden's direction for more.

On the plus side were the pleasantly inoffensive Orlando of Alfred Drake and the distinctly commendable Jaques of Philip Bourneuf, who got a wry and humorous detachment into the part. No doubt his all too famous melancholy saved him from having to cavort.